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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

13 May 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Fleet Actions in a Front Offensive Operation on a Coastal Axis During the Initial Period of War

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article describes various forms of support which can be afforded by a fleet to the ground forces in a front offensive operation in a coastal area. Initially the fleet would oppose the enemy fleet on the coastal axis, with the emphasis on defeating carrier strike large units. The author examines the role of the fleet in amphibious operations, joint operations to seize straits, and the transport of supplies and troop reinforcements in coastal areas. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (70) for 1963.

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2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned

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William E. Nelson

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Late 1963

DATE 13 May 1976

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Fleet Actions in a Front Offensive Operation on a Coastal Axis During the Initial Period of War

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (70) for 1963 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Rear Admiral A. Kruchenykh. This article describes various forms of support which can be afforded by a fleet to the ground forces in a front offensive operation in a coastal area. Initially the fleet would oppose the enemy fleet on the coastal axis, with the emphasis on defeating carrier strike large units. The author examines the role of the fleet in amphibious operations, as well as in joint operations to seize straits. A fleet must assume the major burden of transport in coastal areas, and also disrupt enemy sea transport operations. While fleet operations should be planned in conjunction with front operations, the author recommends against subordinating the fleet to the front commander for control purposes.

End of Summary

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Comment:

Arkadiy Vasilyevich Kruchenykh has been identified as a candidate of naval sciences and in 1964 was a lecturer in amphibious procedures and the organization and armament of marines at the General Staff Academy.

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Fleet Actions in a Front Offensive Operation on a Coastal Axis During the Initial Period of War

by

Rear Admiral A. Kruchenykh

It is assumed that naval forces will take a very active part in the first front operations on coastal axes. The probable enemy, who has a rather powerful fleet, will assign it the task of supporting his own ground forces that are deployed on the coastal and contiguous operational axes. Of course, the enemy fleet must be opposed first of all by our fleet. Because of the physical geographic features of coastal operational axes, the ground forces of the front will not be able to accomplish many of the very important tasks of the operation without the participation of the fleet.

In order to correctly determine the tasks and nature of actions of the fleet during joint operations with the troops of a front, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the purpose, scope, and characteristics of the front operation.

We will recall that the general purpose of an offensive operation by a front on a coastal axis may be to defeat the opposing grouping of ground forces and, first of all, their means of nuclear attack and aviation; to quickly seize strategically important areas, islands, straits, and naval bases; and, in a number of cases, to force the withdrawal from the war of individual maritime member states of the enemy coalition.

As a rule, modern offensive operations along a coast will be characterized by their broad scope. The depth of the zone of advance of the troops and their average rate of advance can be no less than those achieved in operations conducted in adjacent land operational axes. Any lagging behind by the troops of a coastal front will afford the enemy a situation favoring the delivery of strikes from the sea against the flank and even the rear of the troops of an adjacent front.

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The success of the first offensive operation of a front on a coastal axis depends to a significant degree on the high level of combat readiness of the troops and fleet forces, their

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disposition in accordance with the intended plan of actions, as well as the rapid movement of the main groupings of the front and fleet along the coast for the purpose of seizing coastal areas in the shortest possible time. As is known, the start of the operation will be the initial nuclear strike by the forces of the front against the enemy's means of nuclear attack, his troop groupings, and fleet.

It can be expected that the enemy will employ his nuclear weapons in a similar manner. Nuclear strikes will come from the direction of the sea where missile-carrying submarines and carrier strike large units will have attempted to occupy their positions in advance. On the basis of results of operational training exercises conducted by the US Navy in recent years, in the first two to three days of a war a carrier strike large unit is capable of delivering powerful strikes, using a total of up to 280 nuclear warheads against various installations on the coast and in the interior of the country. Of this number, up to 30 percent of the warheads will be used against nuclear attack means and ground forces groupings.

The offensive of front troops as well as fleet actions will undoubtedly be opposed by other enemy ship groupings in addition to aircraft carriers. These may include groupings of missile-carrying and antisubmarine ships, amphibious assault ships, minelayers, and torpedo boats. They may be used to carry out a wide range of tasks including providing fire support for their own troops, landing amphibious forces, supporting troop movements, and defending straits. The defeat of all of these forces immediately during the first strike will provide the troops of the front and ships of our fleet the freedom of further actions, may disrupt enemy amphibious operations, and will deprive the enemy of the ability to maneuver his troop forces at sea for a long time.

The task of combating aircraft carrier large units will be planned in the form of an independent fleet operation. It will begin simultaneously with the initial strike by strategic missiles. In the course of this operation, tasks will be accomplished which will have a direct influence on the success of ground forces actions on the coastal axis. Thus, the defeat of the main part of the carrier strike large units will not only disrupt nuclear strikes from the direction of the sea against

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strategic installations in our country, but will also weaken the power of nuclear strikes from the direction of the sea against front troops, will restrict the ability of the enemy's carrier-based aviation to support his troops and, consequently, will permit our troops to more rapidly develop their offensive along the coast.

Combat against other sea targets, such as individual combat ships or groupings of amphibious assault and antisubmarine ships of medium and small displacement, will have a direct effect on the actions of the fleet in the front operation on the coastal axis. The forces of the front, for example, the fighter-bombers of the air army, may also take part in the defeat of these ship groupings. The results of combat actions by ground-attack aircraft at sea in the last war showed that air strikes from low altitudes can be very effective. But one cannot always count upon such actions by the aviation. As a rule, the aviation and the missile units will always be employed to their limit by the front command to accomplish tasks in the zone of the offensive in support of the troops.

Other forces of a front may be brought into action against targets at sea. For example, front and army missile brigades as well as bomber aviation are capable of destroying ships at naval bases as well as the bases themselves.

We should not exclude the allocation of fleet forces with their nuclear warheads for the destruction of targets in the zone of actions of the front troops in the plan for the initial front strike.

The allocation of fleet forces to destroy coastal targets may be considered especially in those cases when for any reason a part of the fleet forces is not required to combat enemy ship groupings and the conditions of the situation require their use to deliver strikes against targets on land. However, under all conditions the main efforts of the fleet must always, in our opinion, be concentrated on the defeat of carrier strike large units.

One of the major tasks which the fleet must accomplish in support of ground forces is the landing of amphibious landing forces. The use of amphibious landings will make it possible to

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overcome obstacles, bypass groupings of defending enemy troops and at the same time prevent reserves from reaching them, destroy nuclear attack means in the depth of the enemy's operational disposition, rout reserves or capture important key positions -- bridges, crossings, canal locks, canals, etc. Accomplishing such tasks by amphibious landings will permit the troops of the front to carry out the offensive at high speed.

It is advisable to land amphibious forces immediately at the start of an operation to a depth of 100 to 300 kilometers. Taking advantage of enemy disorganization caused by the initial strikes, it will be possible for the landing forces to destroy the surviving operational-tactical nuclear attack means, capture important tactical fighter airfields and, by operating against individual groups of enemy troops, help the divisions of the first echelon accomplish the immediate task of the front quickly. The strength of an amphibious force landed in one area should not, in our opinion, exceed that of a motorized rifle regiment reinforced with tanks. A force of this composition could operate in a zone eight to ten kilometers wide.

The success of the actions of an amphibious landing force will be determined to a great extent by its well-timed preparation. Even in peacetime the deployment of troops assigned to participate as amphibious forces in a landing must be such that they will be able to arrive quickly at their designated points of embarkation at the beginning of a war. As a rule, following a march the troops should be positioned in an area up to 30 kilometers from the embarkation points, which would enable them to reach these points in time of darkness and board the amphibious assault ships. Embarkation points should be selected in those areas of the coast where there are roads, where amphibious assault ships can anchor safely and where the ships can be loaded quickly (in two to three hours) with combat equipment and troops.

The amphibious landing of troops is the responsibility of the fleet. The majority of existing ships that have been assigned this task are not capable of transporting heavy combat equipment. At the same time, exercises conducted by coastal military districts show that a landing force cannot perform its functions without heavy equipment. Therefore, the fleet must have special amphibious assault ships for transporting personnel

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together with all of their combat equipment. These ships must be fast and be able to carry missile launchers, tanks, prime movers, and motor vehicles, affording them the capability of leaving the ships directly onto an unprepared shore. It is important that these ships be able to break through independently to the shore, negotiating obstacle zones set up in the water by the enemy along his coastline. The amphibious assault ships should be armed with missiles to neutralize the antilanding defense of the enemy and support the landing force on the shore.

We believe that the Navy should now have assault transport large units consisting of squadrons of amphibious assault ships and battalions of marines. The existence of such forces in each fleet would permit the ground forces to make extensive use of amphibious landing forces at the beginning of a war to quickly defeat opposing groupings of enemy forces on a coastal axis.

In an offensive conducted by ground forces on a coastal axis, a fleet may be assigned the task of acting jointly with the troops of the front to seize straits. For closed-sea fleets, the accomplishment of this task may be the main extent of its actions, since the seizure of such straits will permit the fleet forces to go out to theaters on the open seas and, in some theaters, will make it possible to shift the combat actions of a front's troops from one continent or theater of military operations to another.

The grouping of fleet forces for the purpose of operating jointly with the troops of a front in capturing straits depends chiefly upon the composition of the enemy's ground and naval forces defending the straits zone, the possibility of their being reinforced, the nature of the defense, and the military-geographic conditions of the straits zone (the number of straits in the zone, their width and depth, the presence of islands, etc.). In general, the grouping of fleet forces may include a detachment of amphibious assault ships with their escorts, a detachment of artillery support ships, one or several groups of missile and torpedo boats, a detachment of minesweepers, a group of coastal missile units, and an aviation group. The basic element of this grouping would be a detachment of amphibious assault ships for transporting troops across the straits and subsequently delivering supplies to them. The composition of each detachment is determined by the task assigned

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to it and by the availability of the appropriate ships in the fleet inventory.

The seizure of straits may occur while front troops are accomplishing either their immediate or subsequent task. Depending upon the situation, the process itself of fighting for the straits will develop in different ways. The first possible way is the capture in succession of opposite sides of a strait. The ground forces will first break through the fortified lines on one bank and, having secured them, will use their own crossing means with the assistance of some of the fleet forces to make an assault crossing of the water obstacle and capture important areas on the opposite shore. Subsequently, other troops of the front will cross the water obstacle while fleet forces prevent enemy ships from penetrating into the area of the straits zone. In those cases where the width of the straits makes it difficult to use troop water crossing means or when there are enemy-defended islands in the straits, another method may be used -- the movement of troops to the straits and then the capture of islands and areas on the opposite shore using specially trained landing forces. In this case, the actions of the fleet, in addition to preventing enemy ship groupings from entering the straits zone, will include landing amphibious forces and delivering supplies and reserves to them, as well as combating enemy landing forces and disrupting his lines of communication. If there are islands in the straits, their capture may require the landing of an amphibious force comprising up to one motorized rifle or tank division. Thirty amphibious assault ships and seven medium-displacement transport ships can carry one division.

In order for a front to maintain a high rate of advance on a coastal axis, its troops will constantly be in need of new forces and the timely supply of materiel-technical means. The delivery of supplies and the transport of troops will have to be carried out over territory with a heavily damaged road network. Therefore, the principal means of transportation may be sea transport. Accordingly, this form of transportation may be the only means available for moving cargoes and troops in certain theaters of military operations (for example, the Far Eastern and Northern).

Sea transport will be advantageous if it takes less time than land transport. In addition, the sea transport of troops

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and supplies may be advisable if the volume of cargo and distances to be covered are great. This may be corroborated by calculations. Thus, the delivery of supplies by sea for one of the armies of a front (a cargo weight of 20,000 tons) to a depth of 800 to 900 kilometers (when the cargo is loaded on transport ships in advance) may require only two days. But the transport of the same amount by land would require at least 1,500 to 2,000 trucks and could be accomplished in four to five days (when the road network has been kept fully intact).

The transportation of troops and their supplies in the course of an offensive along a straits zone should be planned in peacetime. To ensure that the advancing troops will receive the necessary supplies on time, the supplies should be concentrated on the means of transport during the first two nights of the war, while some of them could be loaded even before the start of the war. We assume that the first delivery of supplies will have to be made to a depth of 300 to 500 kilometers, that is, to the depth of the front's immediate task. By this time the motorized rifle and tank divisions of the first echelon will have almost completely exhausted their reserves.

Sea transportation acquires particular importance in the period when the front is accomplishing its subsequent mission, when lines of communication have become severely extended, there is an increase in the number of difficult obstacles on land that must be negotiated, and the troops, in developing success, are operating along separate axes. Under these conditions the entire burden of supplying the troops may be placed upon the fleet.

This task is extremely complex for the fleet. Considering the fact that major ports and bases will most likely be destroyed or mined, it will be expedient to transport cargoes by small transport ships and barges.

The matter of combating amphibious landing forces that may be landed by the enemy in the course of an operation by the troops of a coastal front may be far from being least important and may, in a number of cases, assume primary importance in the activities of a fleet. Our probable enemies have large amphibious landing capabilities and, where an offensive is conducted on a coastal axis, one must always consider the real possibility that enemy amphibious landings may occur in the rear of our troops.

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It is sufficient to say that the complement of the regular US Navy includes more than 200 amphibious assault ships and vessels of varying displacement. If even 50 percent of this enemy force were able to concentrate in some theater of military operations, they would be able to move up to one army corps (with the condition that the rear elements would be moved by the second echelon of the landing force on transport ships). Consequently, participation in the antilanding defense of a coast occupied by the troops of a front will be one of the tasks of a fleet in the course of the first offensive operation on a coastal axis.

The landing of an enemy force may occur either on territory where our troops were deployed before the start of a war or on territory occupied by them as a result of a successful offensive. The combat actions of a fleet in these two situations are not the same. A characteristic of the first case will be the use of fleet forces in accordance with a previously developed system of antilanding defense, the basis of which will be the groupings of the ground forces and aviation, the engineer preparation of the coast, and an integrated system of minefields, missile and artillery fire, and observation. This will make it possible to concentrate all efforts on routing the landing force while it is still in the landing areas. The assault landing means and amphibious tanks approaching the shore will be the targets for the artillery of troops defending the coast. Concentrations of amphibious landing means in the deployment area can be struck by army and front missiles. At the same time we cannot exclude actions by submarines and fleet aviation. They will be able to destroy assault transport means and artillery support ships on distant approaches to the landing area as well as in the area of their deployment and maneuvering.

In the second case, there may be no previously organized system for the antilanding defense of the coast. The basis of this defense will be the troops assigned to hold sections of the coast by decision of the front (army) troop commander while the operation is in progress.

Engineer preparation of the coast will be elementary at best due to the lack of time. Minefields laid hastily and having a low density will not represent a significant obstacle to the enemy. They may only hinder the landing and slightly increase the time required to accomplish it.

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When there is sufficient time for the preparation of an antilanding defense, minefields may be laid only on those axes where there is the greatest threat. Minelaying capabilities may be characterized by the following figures. Six minelayers can simultaneously lay about 360 mines, and with two lines of minefields cover an area up to 20 kilometers long which is threatened by an amphibious landing. We should note that the minelaying process does not take a long time. But the loading of mines on ships and the movement of the ships to the area to be mined requires a longer period of time.

The grouping of troops for antilanding defense must be composed of those elements of the operational disposition of the troops that are able to deploy on the most probable axes of an enemy landing. During the initial strikes, it is important that the forces of the fleet destroy or maximally weaken the amphibious landing force at sea at the greatest possible distance from the coast in order to force the enemy to abort the landing or to weaken his forces to such an extent that the ground forces together with the fleet forces will be able to totally defeat the amphibious force in the landing area.

Strikes by submarines and fleet aviation against amphibious landing forces at sea must be as powerful as possible using the maximum number of nuclear warheads allocated for this purpose. Nuclear weapons should be used first of all to destroy the troop-carrying assault transport means. These strikes should deal the enemy a decisive blow on the water and delay the movement of the landing force toward the shore, so that our own ground forces will have more time to deploy against the surviving amphibious detachments.

If, after nuclear strikes have been carried out, the enemy amphibious landing force is still able to continue moving toward the shore, the mobile coastal missile and artillery units of the fleet as well as surface ships should be brought into action as the enemy approaches the probable landing sectors. Under these conditions the defeat of the amphibious landing force can be concluded through the joint efforts of the fleet and the ground forces in the landing area.

The fleet must also exert great effort in combating the enemy's sea transport operations. Our probable enemy's

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requirements for sea transportation in support of his troops during the first operation by the troops of a front will be no less than ours, and in some cases may be greater. This is due to the fact that individual operational axes even in the European theater may be separated by stretches of water as a result of which the supply of individual, even non-isolated groupings may be possible only by sea. A situation may also occur in which part of the reserves may be located on islands, for example, in England, and in the course of an operation the enemy will be required to move them by sea to commit them to an engagement on coastal axes. In addition, the enemy may find it necessary to use sea transportation to supply individual groupings on a coast or to evacuate his troops that have been driven to the sea.

This, of course, is not a complete list of all the enemy's requirements for the use of sea transportation, but even the cases mentioned above are sufficient for us to look upon the disruption of the enemy's so-called close sea lines of communication as an urgent task of the fleet and, in a number of cases, of the front aviation also. We should point out that this task should not be confused with that of disrupting and severing the enemy's ocean lines of communication. The latter is accomplished by submarines and fleet aviation in the course of an independent operation. It cannot be compared in time or purposes with the assistance rendered by the forces of the fleet to the troops of a front in their first operation.

It seems to us that in combat on close lines of communication, the fleet forces should destroy enemy convoys at sea while the front aviation should destroy them on the approaches to the coast and in unloading areas. The air reconnaissance of targets should be the responsibility of the forces of naval and front aviation.

The entire complex of tasks to be accomplished by a fleet while assisting the troops in a front operation on a coastal axis during the initial period of war requires that the actions of its forces be suitably organized. Rather than consider all of the measures required to prepare the forces, we will dwell only on some of the features. First of all, the combat actions of a fleet should be prepared in peacetime simultaneously with preparations for the first front operation by the forces of the coastal military districts. When combat actions begin, it will be

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necessary simply to refine the tasks and the procedures by which they are to be carried out.

It is necessary to plan the actions of a fleet for the high rate of advance that will be maintained by the troops of the front and the very short time frame for the conduct of the first front operation (10 to 12 days). At first glance, it would seem that a fleet with its mobile forces would always be able to accomplish its tasks faster than the troops on land. However, the conditions in some theaters may limit the capabilities of a fleet in that, before the seizure of straits, not all of a fleet's forces will be able to operate in support of the first front operation (for example, the Baltic and Black Sea fleets). Therefore, in the plan of the actions of a fleet, it will be necessary to provide for the timely transfer, even in peacetime, of its units to adjacent seas, the quick seizure of straits at the beginning of a war and, immediately following this, the movement of the remaining forces of the fleet to the open sea.

In addition, as the troops of the front advance, the fleet must move the basing of its forces closer to the combat action areas of the front troops. To provide basing in new areas where a significant part of the equipment will have been destroyed, it will be advisable to use mobile basing means, and floating berths, mobile machine shops, pumping stations, etc.

Mobile basing means may be transported to the designated points by sea, rail or motor transport and made ready for use in a short period of time. For example, a floating berth park capable of providing berthing for six transport ships or 10 to 12 barges can be moved on 36 two-axle flatcars and four boxcars or 44 tractor-trailers and be assembled at the basing point in 12 to 16 hours.

In addition to organizing the basing of the forces participating in the first front offensive operation, in some theaters it will be necessary, immediately following the capture of an enemy-held coast, to establish a basing system for navy submarines that have operated until this time at sea but for some reason require the immediate restoration of their combat effectiveness. The floating berth park mentioned above will provide berthing for six large submarines.

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Different viewpoints have been expressed in the military press on the question of organizing the control of fleet forces in a closed-sea theater. For example, some believe that during the time of a front operation, it would be advisable to subordinate the fleet operationally to the front troop commander, while others believe that this should not be done.

In our opinion, the second viewpoint is more correct for the following reasons. First, the main efforts of the fleet during the first operation must be concentrated on defeating the enemy's naval groupings in areas a long distance away from the location of the front troops. The organization of such combat actions requires that the front command be appropriately qualified and prepared. It seems to us that there is no need to assign this unfamiliar task of controlling the fleet to the commander and staff of the front. Second, in some theaters the fleet must simultaneously support the offensive of a coastal front and engage in combat against aircraft carrier large units as well as missile-carrying submarines at sea. Under such conditions the subordination of the fleet to the front troop commander would be an even greater error.

As a rule the fleet commander will control the forces of the fleet in the first operation from his permanent command post since it is best equipped with the necessary means of control. But for accomplishing certain tasks (such as landing amphibious forces or routing an enemy landing force), the control of the fleet's forces may be effected also from remote control posts located on the axis of actions of the main forces of the fleet that are supporting the front. It is very important that all questions of control be resolved by the fleet commander with 50X1-HUM delay and that their purpose be to ensure successful fleet actions in assisting the offensive by the ground forces of the front.

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